Sexual harassment: Is your practice in danger?

The happiness and headaches of house calls

Time is running out to save on your taxes

DECEMBER 1991

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...AGAZINE OF PRACTICE MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

Don't touch those bottles!

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MEMO FROM THE EDITOR

Don't get lost in the fog

Bob Levoy doesn't pull any punches. Neither does Dr. Tom Catanzaro or Dr. Marty Becker. Each of these contributors presents a clear message in this issue: Take the time now to clarify what you're doing in your practice, and where you're going. Before you allow fog and confusion to settle in for another year, at least recognize that although success may not be simple, the components that contribute to success can be—if you take the time to plan.

In journalism, we follow something called the "fog index." If we present a sentence that doesn't quickly and easily make sense to the reader, our fog index is high—and we haven't done our jobs. It makes no difference if the subject is very basic or endlessly complicated; to make this magazine work, we make every attempt to plow through the fog first so that you don't have to while you're reading.

Your practice's fog index is another matter. If feel that your marketing efforts are sporadic and seem to take you nowhere, or your client traffic isn't what you'd like it to be and you don't know why, you need to find a path out of the fog. If your practice is in danger of a sexual harassment lawsuit, or your employees are confused about *any* of your office policies, you need to cut your risk—now. This month's articles can be the beacons that lead the way.

Levoy, for example, says that it's time to stop for a minute and *really* consider the steps you're taking to build your practice. Dr. Catanzaro proposes a plan, a road map to guide you where you want to take your practice—after, of course, you decide where that is. Dr. Becker says that merely wondering about your problems won't solve them; you have to take action. And attorney Susan Gorn, and business writers Phillip Perry and Richard Ensman, say you need practice policies that everyone follows consistently. Pretty simple, right? But at least it's a start. The hardest part may be the decision to come in out of the fog.

Here's to a clear, bright new year. See you in 1992.

Becky Turner

Rebecca R. Turner

veterinary economics

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criteria for approval by the National Charities Information Bureau.

3. Morris Animal Foundation, 45 Inverness Dr., E., Englewood, CO 80112. Founded in 1948 by Mark Morris, DVM, this organization distributes funds for research on animal diseases.

As you plan your donations, keep in mind that approved charities also are worthwhile beneficiaries to remember when drawing up a will or setting up a trust. Most charitable organizations offer ideas for "planned giving"—such as a charitable annuity that provides the donor with an initial tax write-off and income payments for the rest of his or her life.

Giving and sharing are indeed a virtue, but must be done wisely. What a wonderful feeling to know that we've helped!

Nancy Lerner, DVM

STICKER PRICES DON'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY

Thinking of buying a new car? Before you drive off the lot in a 1992 model, look beyond the sticker price, and determine how much it will cost you *each year* to own and operate your dream car.

Assuming a 3-year, 60,000-mile retention cycle, the 1992 Mercedes 300SEL, for example, will cost nearly $18,093 to own and operate per year, while the 1992 Ford Escort LX will cost only $6,790 a year. These figures are from Runzheimer International, Wisconsin-based management consultants.

Why the big difference? Kraig Rodenbeck, director of client service in Runzheimer's transportation division, explains: "Vehicles with high sticker prices lose more in sheer dollar value every year through depreciation than do lower-priced makes and models. This is especially true over the first three years."

The insurance, maintenance, and fuel costs of higher-priced models also cause annual costs to soar. Rodenbeck adds, however, that "higher-priced models tend to retain a proportionally higher resale value, when compared to purchase price, than lower-priced models."

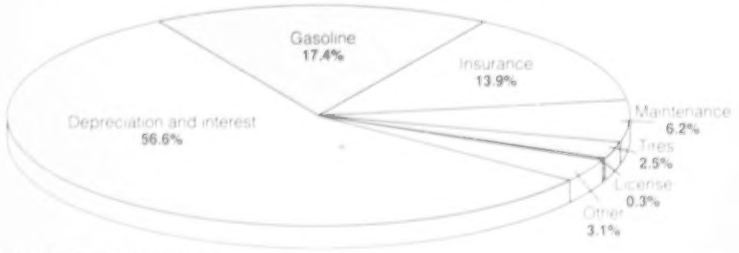
To lower your annual costs, Rodenbeck suggests that you keep your car longer than three years, or drive fewer than 20,000 miles per year.

Which new-car models cost the least and the most to repair? According to *The Complete Car Cost Guide* (IntelliChoice, San Jose, Calif.), the cars with the lowest repair costs include the Chrysler Imperial, Geo Storm series, Mazda RX-7 Coupe, and Geo Prizm series.

Among the cars with the highest repair costs: the Jaguar XJ-S series, Jaguar XJ6 series, Porsche 944 S2 Cabriolet, and Mitsubishi Galant series. ■

WHERE DOES YOUR DOLLAR GO WHEN YOU BUY A NEW CAR?

High repair costs on an older car tend to make a new-car purchase look attractive. But don't forget that more than half of the cost of a new car is consumed by depreciation and interest–either paid or foregone. Those expenses drop sharply as a car ages. Here's a breakdown of the expenses of operating a new car for its first four years.



Source: Runzheimer International

Correction

In the October 1990 issue (page 32), and the October 1991 issue (page 28), the charts contain incorrect figures for the average client transaction fee in the "all DVM" category. The correct figures are as follows:

	Clinical procedures and drugs			Merchandised products		
	1990	1991	Percent change	1990	1991	Percent change
All DVMs	$37.50	$43.00	+14.7%	$17.40	$15.70	-9.8%